



How Long Does Rubbish Really Last?

Aim:

To understand how long items remain in a landfill

Time:

15 min

Best for:

Year 3-8. Links with Science, Geography, Design & Technologies and Sustainability.

Equipment:

Glass bottle

Plastic bag

Plastic beverage bottle

Cigarette butt

Newspaper

Some items will need to go in plastic bags for hygiene reasons.

Activity:

Ask students to sort the items in order - from quickest to breakdown to slowest.

Talk to the other students and see if they think the order is correct.

Ask/talk about whether there should be a greater distance in the line/order between each item (ie. will newspaper and apple core be close together but the glass be a long way down the line).

Run through the time it takes each item to breakdown in landfill:

Glass bottle - One million years

Plastic bag - Unknown, possibly 500+ years

Plastic bottle - Unknown, possibly 500+ years

Aluminium can - 200 to 500 years

Tin can - 80 to 200 years

Rubber sole - 50 to 80 years

Cigarette butt - One to five years

Newspaper - Two to four weeks

Apple Core - One to two weeks

Ask students what we should do with each item (rather than send to landfill).





Curriculum links

	Year	Content Description
Science	4	Natural and processed materials have a range of physical properties; These properties can influence their use (ACSSU074)
	4	Science knowledge helps people to understand the effect of their actions (ACSHE062)
Design & Tech	3-4	Investigate the suitability of materials, systems, components, tools and equipment for a range of purposes (ACTDEK013)
	5-6	Investigate characteristics and properties of a range of materials, systems, components, tools and equipment and evaluate the impact of their use (ACTDEK023)
	7-8	Analyse ways to produce designed solutions through selecting and combining characteristics and properties of materials, systems, components, tools and equipment (ACTDEK034)
Geog	4	The sustainable management of waste from production and consumption (ACHGK025)
	9	The effects of the production and consumption of goods on places and environments throughout the world and including a country from North-East Asia (ACHGK068)
Economics	5	Identify alternative responses to an issue or event, and consider the advantages and disadvantages of preferring one to others (ACHES006)
	6	The effect that consumer and financial decisions can have on the individual, the broader community and the environment (ACHEK010)
	6	Identify alternative responses to an issue or event, and consider the advantages and disadvantages of preferring one to others (ACHES014)

Note 1: the curriculum links listed here are the ones most closely related to the activity, but the list is not exhaustive and there may be links to other learning areas, strands and year levels which are also fulfilled by this activity.

Note 2: For Cross-curriculum priorities and General capabilities, check the Content Descriptions at ACARA.

